

-16-

bulletin board. The written message is deleted by the person reading the message after finishing reading, or the administrator of the device after a predetermined period of time has passed. An advertisement is displayed on the electronic bulletin board.

5 The device may be run by the advertisement rates, or the user may be limited to members and the device may be run based on the membership fees.

The electronic bulletin board is preferably connected to

10 a server. The server is connected to the Internet, enabling people at any place to check what kinds of messages exist on a specific bulletin board via the Internet. Furthermore, a plurality of bulletin boards can mutually exchange messages via the Internet. For example, a plurality of bulletin boards can be made to operate

15 together. It is possible to display the contents of a plurality of bulletin boards at different locations on one screen one by one or at the same time using a divided screen.

The present invention is not limited to the above

20 embodiments; possible variations within the scope of the claims are covered by the claims.

Furthermore, means as used herein does not necessarily mean physical means, but includes cases where the function of

25 the means is realized through software. The function of a single means may be realized through two or more physical means, and vice versa.